

## Big Thicket Day – October 13

Members and friends assembled in Saratoga on Oct. 13 for the annual general membership meeting with Mary Catherine Johnston, President, presiding.

The Nominating Committee reported the election results for 2013-14: Jan Ruppel, Pres.; Dr. Bruce Drury, Vice-Pres.; Elaine Allums, Secretary; Fred Allen, Treasurer; Mary Catherine Johnston, Past-Pres. Directors re-elected for 2013-14 include Judith Aronow, Ellen Buchanan, Lane Harrison, Dr. Carl Knight, Dale Kruse, Dale Parish, Hon. Ken Pelt, and Dr. James Westgate. Incumbents for 2012-2013 include Gilbert Adams, Michael Black, Dr. Jerry Cook, Dr. Pete Gunter, Michael Hoke, Wendy Ledbetter, Ann Roberts, Rosalie Rogers, and Charles Smith.

The treasurer's report was presented, and committee reports were distributed to save time for the program.

### PROGRAM

After the President's Report and an update by Supt Douglas Neighbor, Big Thicket National Preserve awards were presented by Committee Chair, Rose Ann Jordan, and BTA's Executive Director, Bruce Walker.

#### Thomas E. Lubbert Superior Achievement Award



The Thomas E. Lubbert Superior Achievement Award recognizes a Big Thicket National Preserve employee. Maintenance worker Louis Sheffield served six years as a seasonal employee and seventeen years as a full time employee with a record of productive and outstanding performance. In addition to his duties in the Big Thicket, Louis spent three weeks at Amistad National Recreation Area when a call went out for assistance.

#### R. E. Jackson Conservation Award



The R. E. Jackson Conservation Award recognizes significant achievements and contributions to conservation. Dr. Larry Brown, "the plant man," was an instructor of Biology at Houston Community College until his retirement in 2006. He has received many honors and awards for his work with vascular flora. For the Preserve he produced annotated checklists of the vascular flora of the Turkey Creek Unit, the Big Sandy Unit, the Lance Rosier Unit, the Beech Creek Unit, the Loblolly Unit, the Menard Creek Corridor Unit, and the Jack Gore and Neches Bottom Units. Dr. Brown is an active leader in the Thicket of Diversity, All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory.

# Conservation Outlook

---

## National Parks Conservation Association - HELP Prevent a Sequester

Our national parks inspire visitors from across the world and support local economies nationwide. Yet our national parks are vulnerable from the number one threat facing our parks today—inadequate funding.

After two years of declining funding, national parks now face the threat of additional devastating cuts through the looming “sequester” beginning in January 2013 and scheduled to continue for a decade. If Congress doesn’t agree on a budget, the Park Service could face cuts of as much as 10 percent that would likely mean closed visitor centers, closed campgrounds, closed park sites, and rangers and other park employees out of a job.

According to NPCA, cuts could be allocated several ways.

- ◆ An eight percent cut could close 140 park units [160 if 10%] with the smallest budgets;
- ◆ Close 91 parks [110 if 10%] with the least visitation;
- ◆ Close National Mall and Memorial Parks and Gateway National Recreation Areas. Larger parks might have to close or understaff visitor centers and campgrounds, discontinue ranger programs, reduce maintenance or close altogether for some periods. All of this could impact local economies.

As a top tourist attraction, national parks cost us less than one percent of our federal budget, supporting \$31 billion of private-sector spending and 258,000 jobs each year. And even in these challenging fiscal times, new poll results indicate that 92 percent of likely voters think that federal spending on national parks should be increased or kept the same. National parks are “America’s Best Idea.” We can’t afford to let them fall through the cracks in the midst of the federal budget debate.

For more information: contact John Garder, Budget & Appropriations Legislative Representative at [jgarder@npca.org](mailto:jgarder@npca.org).

For the record: Big Thicket National Preserve is still on the list of America’s Most Endangered Parks.

## The Conservation Fund

TCF has transferred to the Preserve another 1,202.63 acres. The tracts include areas adjoining Big Sandy Creek, Canyonlands, and the largest tract adjoins the Beaumont Unit. Included in the package are tracts acquired by the Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust on Village Creek.

## National Wildlife Refuge

Volunteers from General Electric (35) and Trinity River Refuge volunteers (5) forged a primitive hiking trail link-

ing the Liberty Municipal Park and Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge. The volunteers arrived at dawn to the Municipal Park armed with handsaws, lopping shears, and axes to hack their way through brambles, branches, and cypress knees. The trail was cleared of logs and raked. Hunting and collecting of plants or animals is prohibited. Take only pictures and leave only footprints.

The Refuge also partnered with General Electric and the City of Liberty to celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week.

## Keystone XL Pipeline (OR Lost Causes)



The Keystone pipeline—that so-called bonanza for jobs and oil—is decimating a pathway through East Texas. It’s incredible that the media still lead people to believe that this disaster is actually a job creator (some say less than 2,000 TEMPORARY jobs) and will give relief at the gas pump (lots-a-luck folks—most of the oil is contracted for overseas). Local landowners and protestors are being threatened with arrest.

The southern section of the pipeline received government approval in July... That construction was imminent became clear in late July, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved the last of three key permits needed to build the southern section.

According to Kim Murphy (LA Times, Aug. 16) “The Canadian pipeline company TransCanada has quietly begun construction of the southern leg of the controversial Keystone XL pipeline, installing segments near Livingston, Texas, company officials confirmed Thursday. [The pipeline clearing now crosses SH 105 near the Liberty County line and crosses FM 770 near Daisetta.]

Pipeline opponents, who say the tar sands bitumen is an especially toxic form of oil that poses a hazard to farms, ranches and residential drinking water across the U.S. heart-

# Conservation (cont'd.)

land, are regrouping to fight the revised international permit and to try to slow construction on the southern route, where some landowners still are fighting Canada's attempts to gain access to their property. – MJ, ed.

**Longleaf Alliance:** The Longleaf Alliance national meeting was in Texas for the first time on Oct.23-26 at the Fredonia Hotel in Nacogdoches. There were around 300-400 attendees, a good program and excellent field trips. ([www.longleafalliance.org](http://www.longleafalliance.org))

## Longleaf Restoration – Plan Ahead

In 2010 and 2011 on MLK weekend, National Parks Conservation Association partnered with BTNP to restore longleaf pines in the Turkey Creek Unit. Another event is planned for 2013: mark Jan. 21, 9:30-4:00 on your calendar. Meet at the BTNP Visitor Center. Lunch is provided onsite. Let's "dibble"!

## Texas Conservation Alliance

TCA convened in Lufkin, Saturday Sept. 28, with Dr. Thad Sitton as guest speaker. TCA honored Buddy and Ellen Temple for their lifetime of conservation work.

On October 20, TCA, Friends of the Neches River, The Conservation Fund and USFWS sponsored a Refuge celebration at the Neches River Ranch near Jacksonville. During the afternoon and evening, there was live music, tours of the Neches River Wildlife Refuge, a canoe trip, and great food.



*At the TCA meeting held September 28 in Lufkin, Buddy and Ellen Temple were honored for their conservation work.*



# Diversity Dispatch

## Mussel Science Café

On Friday, October 12, Thicket of Diversity hosted a Science Café on mussels aboard the Neches River Adventure's Cardinal Cruise pontoon boat. Bob Boensch, Preserve Manager of The Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary, discussed mussel research in the Neches River and nearby waterways. Boensch is a team leader in surveying mussels for the All-Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, a project to identify all forms of life in the Big Thicket region. Mussels are considered good environmental indicator species, as they yield valuable information on water quality. Boensch also works closely with Texas Parks and Wildlife's Mussel Watch program in his mussel surveys.

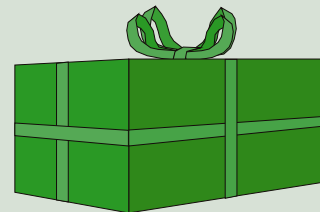
## Mushroom Walk

Dave and Pat Lewis will lead a Mushroom walk on Nov. 10. The group will meet at 10 AM at the BTNP Field Research Station in Saratoga. Jay Justice of Arkansas will attend. The group will foray into the Lance Rosier Unit of the BTNP, collect and record species for the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) species list. The group returns to the FRS, for lunch, and to discuss the morning's finds.

Bring collecting gear (basket, waxed or paper bags, and knife to dig specimens), rainwear, water, bug spray, and a sack lunch. Please call or email with any questions: David & Patricia Lewis 409-423-3776 or email: [dandplewis \(@\) gmail.com](mailto:dandplewis@gmail.com).

## Early Christmas Shopping?

Give the perfect gift  
A book from the Big Thicket



Use the enclosed order form  
to make your selection

# Preserve Overview ... by Ann Roberts

---

## Vacancies filled

A lot of the vacant positions have been filled in the last year. They include Chief of Maintenance, Edward Comeau; Chief of Resource Management, Jalyn Cummings; and Administrative Officer, Audrey Ashcraft. Other positions filled include Geologist Intern, Nicole Thomas; Facility Services Assistant, James Rogers; Student Intern, Education Specialist Michael Black; and Student Intern, Visitor Use Assistant, Max Harper.

Pending positions to be filled include Administrative Support Assistant, Fire Seasonal positions, Ecologist, and Maintenance Mechanic Lead.

## Ecosystem Analysis

Leslie Dubey (Environmental Education) and Michael Black report lunching with Astronaut Bernard Harris. Work continues with Dr. Otilia Ubina of Lamar University for seven years presenting "Ecosystem Analysis" to students in the Bernard Harris Science Camp. They also attended a meeting of the 20 universities that sponsor the camps and gave highlights of our program and our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) goals to the professors and Dr. Harris. Michael is working to make next summer's camp the best ever, says Dubey.

## JASON

Dr. James Westgate brought some Argonauts (middle school students selected for the JASON program) and Lamar University film students to a "Map and Compass" program. They filmed the program at the Visitor Center on Oct. 13 for inclusion in a film they are producing for the JASON event at the John Gray Institute in February.

## Bonn University Visit

Dr. James Westgate (Lamar U geology professor & BTA director) and Leslie Dubey hosted two professors and 20 graduate paleontology/biology students from the University of Bonn (Germany) Sept. 19 & 20 on the last days of their three week tour of Texas. The group stayed at the FRS both nights. Westgate provided a Cajun shrimp boil on Thursday evening, and on Friday launched a canoe trip through the Cook's Lake swamp.

## Black Bear

Hardin County Commissioner Ken Pelt donated an Eastern Black Bear mount (photo at right). It is displayed in the Discovery Room at the Visitor Center.

## Woodland Clinic

The staff hosted the NRCS Woodland Clinic and Land Judging competition on Oct. 11. Area NRCS staff and about 130 stu-

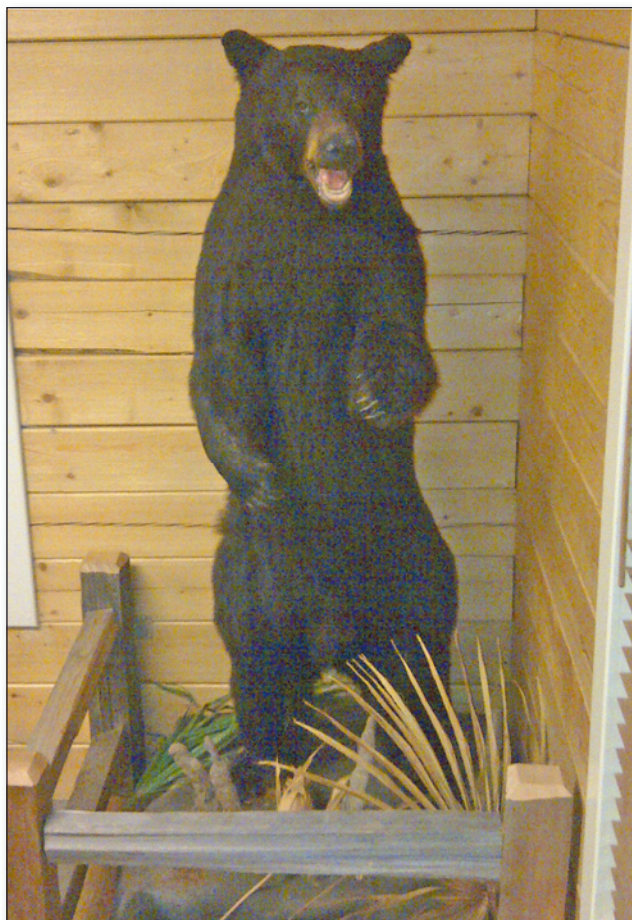
dents and sponsors from local schools as far away as Nacogdoches met at the Visitor Center and competed by identifying trees and shrubs, naming animals from tracks, bones, or feathers, determining sustainable land uses, and describing best forestry practices.

## Hunting

The Preserve's report on hunting harvests for 2011-12 included 96 bucks, 108 does, 2,397 squirrels, 240 hogs, and 121 rabbits. Acreage available for hunting was 47,400 acres total in Beaumont, Beech Creek, Big Sandy Creek, Neches Bottom/Jack Gore Baygall, and Lance Rosier Units.

## General Management Plan / EIS

The Preserve General Management Plan / EIS draft plan will be published early in 2013. Notices will be mailed and posted on the website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/bith>) announcing the 60-day review and comment period, which will also include the date, time and location for the public meeting on the draft plan.



# East Texas Miscellany

---

## East Texas Historical Association

ETHA met in Nacogdoches at the Fredonia Hotel Sept. 27-29. The program included a session on the Neches Wild and Scenic River, with Jonathan Gerland (History Center, Diboll) presiding, and with presentations by authors Dr. F. E. Abernethy and Richard Donovan, and TCA Executive Director Janice Bezanson. The meeting was a great opportunity to see old friends and meet some new ones.



*Jonathan Gerland, Dr. F.E. Abernethy, and Richard Donovan at the East Texas Historical Association meeting in Nacogdoches.*

## Marysee Prairie

During summer months, Texas Land Conservancy Steward Daniel Dietz contracted removal of invading pines from Marysee Prairie – long overdue. Numerous limbs and debris were piled in 25 brush-piles, and both Dietz and the Prairie Committee have burned at least 14-15 of them. Tom Maddux, Stewardship Chair for Marysee Prairie is asking for volunteers to help complete the burn project and to work on removing exotics at upcoming workdays on Nov. 3 and 10. Another problem is stump removal.

Marysee is located in Liberty County on CR 2077 – a cul-de-sac north of SH105. See you there? For more information, e-mail [maxine@mxjohnston.com](mailto:maxine@mxjohnston.com)

## Birthday Bash

Brandt Mannchen (tree-hugger extraordinaire) reached 60 years that included 40 years of conservation activism (understatement). Brandt celebrated with a “roast” on Sept. 22 at St. Paul’s Methodist Church. The best “roast” was presented by Ken Kramer (LSC Sierra) who reminisced about some backpacking trips together. Come to think about it, most folks were remarkably kind to our favorite troublemaker, who has an unmatched record of work for our national forests, Big Thicket, and issues too numerous to mention.

# Big Thicket Day ... continued from page 1

---

## Others Recognized

Also recognized were new Life Members Dr. Carl Knight, Margaret Green and Ellen Temple. Appreciation was demonstrated for grant funders – the Brown Foundation, the TLL Temple Foundation, MeadWestvaco, the Entergy Charitable Foundation, and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club.

## Guest Speaker

Jonathan Gerland, Director of the History Center in Diboll, presented a PowerPoint program on “Big Thicket History – The Neches River – Lumber – Oil – Railroads.” Gerland previously worked at the Tyrrell Historical Library and the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center.

## Memorial Tree Planting

After the program a native redbud tree was planted in memory of conservation role models. Recognized were giants in Big Thicket history, Geraldine Watson and Howard Peacock. Other recent losses included John Parker, Tom Bean, Buddy Hollis, Richard Stewart, Walter Crawford, Jr., Helen Barefield, Naomi Grubbs, Darrel Shine and Cynthia Troxell.



*Assisting with the planting of a “memorial” native redbud tree at the BTNP Research Station in Saratoga were: David and Carmen Reisdorf (front left), Leta Parker, Marvin Ellis Watson, BTA President Cathy Johnston, and Kountze student Austin Parrish.*



Big Thicket Association  
P.O. Box 198  
Saratoga, TX 77585-0198

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 1

**Big Thicket Reporter**  
published quarterly by  
Big Thicket Association  
(www.bigthicket.org)

**Editors**  
Maxine Johnston | Ann Roberts  
(maxine@mxjohnston.com)

**Layout**  
Connie Blakley  
(connie@cblakley.com)

**Send address changes to address  
noted above**

## WEB SITES

**Big Thicket Association**  
www.bigthicket.org

**Big Thicket National Preserve**  
www.nps.gov/bith

**East Texas Black Bear Task Force**  
www.bbct.org

**Conservation Fund**  
www.conservationfund.org

**Gulf Coast Mycological Society**  
www.gsmco.org

**National Audubon Society**  
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org  
www.houstonaudubon.org

**National Parks Conserv. Assoc.**  
www.npca.org

**Native Plant Society of Texas**  
www.npsot.org

**Nature Conservancy**  
www.nature.org/texas

**Outdoor Nature Club, Houston**  
www.outdoornatureclub.org

**Sierra Club Golden Triangle Group**  
www.texas.sierraclub.org/triangle

**Texas Conservation Alliance**  
www.TCAtexas.org

**Village Creek State Park**  
www.tpwd.state.tx.us.park

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 2012

**November 3 & 10**  
Marysee Prairie workdays.  
See Conservation Outlook

**November 10**  
Mushroom Walk, led by David &  
Patricia Lewis.  
See Diversity Dispatch

**November 14 – BTNP Events**  
Kid’s Library Program, Willard  
Library, 3590 East Lucas, Beau-  
mont; 10:30 AM

Orchids of the BigThicket, Sci-  
ence Café with Joe Liggio,  
Logon Café, 3805 Calder,  
Beaumont, 6:00 PM

**November 17 – BTNP Event**  
Walk in the Woods, Kirby Nature  
Trail; meet at Kirby Nature Trail  
on FM 420 at 10:00 AM

**November 18 – BTNP Event**  
Useful Plants of the Big Thicket,  
Sundew Trail, @ US 69, West on  
FM 2827, 2:00 PM

**November 30 – BTNP Event**  
“Whirligigs!” – Science Café with  
Ed Realzola, Logon Café, 3805  
Calder, Beaumont, 6:00 PM

**December 1 – BTNP Event**  
Whirligig Walk with Ed Realzola;  
meet at Woodlands trailhead  
on FM 1276 between Dallards-  
ville and US 190.

### 2013

**January 21**  
NPCA Longleaf Planting in co-  
operation with BTNP

**January 26**  
BTA Board of Directors  
meeting